

SIN: IS IT SERIOUS?

By

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People born since 1960 have been deprived of one of the foundation blocks that provide stability and guidance in life: a community conscience regarding sin.

This can be illustrated by comparing today's moral tone with that during the great depression of the 30's. Businesses failed, unemployment lines stretched for blocks, and people were without work, with no welfare assistance. People wore old clothing and often were hungry, with little or nothing to eat. It was a real struggle to survive.

But in spite of this, we lived in peace and safety. Few people bothered to lock their doors, and you could leave the car unlocked with the keys in it. Teenage pregnancy was rare. Robbery and violence were so uncommon that when they did occur they made the headlines. Why such a difference between then and now?

From the days of Karl Marx, Charles Darwin and Sigmund Freud, there has been a concentrated effort to eliminate the Christian basis of Western civilization. Under the influence of John Dewey and other elite educators, this malevolent effort grew until it produced the "new morality" of the 60's, and the change of attitude became increasingly conspicuous by various forms of deviant behavior. God can no longer be recognized in the public schools, leaving the children to establish their own values, based upon the opinions of their peers (other students) and their own experiences. This program has succeeded in destroying the conscience of millions and producing a generation that embraces obscenity, pornography, violence and excessive immoral conduct as normal and acceptable.

The concept of sin has been ridiculed out of education and the media. Young people are taught that pre-marital sex might result in disease or pregnancy, but no one dares mention the "S" word. The immoral escapades of politicians are shrugged off by their supporters, as having nothing to do with their character and qualifications for office. The modern rule is that nothing is considered wrong as long as it doesn't break any state or federal laws, and the only sin is to believe in sin.

ROOTED IN UNBELIEF. This denial, however, goes much deeper than the denial of sin itself. It derives from a denial of God. It is rooted in unbelief, as this is the original sin and the root of all sin.

The disobedience of Adam and Eve, which we usually think of as the first sin, was the product of their believing a lie rather than believing God. "You will not die," said the serpent, "for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like gods, knowing good and evil."¹ Their disbelief of God was the primary sin, resulting in eating the forbidden fruit. **The sin of disobedience is born of a greater sin, that of unbelief.**

There has been sufficient evidence of God and His righteousness, Paul writes, that the ungodly are without excuse. "Because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks, but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened."² Unbelief is not only the primary sin, but it blazes the trail farther and farther from the Creator down into a cesspool of evil.

“And even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, faithless, without natural affection, unmerciful.”³ This catalogue of sins describes much of modern society which is all adrift in unbelief.

For anyone who wants to resist the temptation to sin, one thing is essential: **to believe that the will of God is better than the pleasure of sin.**

FROM THE HEART. To violate God’s law is sin, but if we think of sin only in terms of law-breaking, we are missing the heart of the matter. The problem is not merely that one of God’s rules is broken, but that His very purpose and design are rejected. We were created in the image of God.⁴ We are not eternal or omnipotent or immortal, as God is, but we are created with mental powers, to think and reason as God does. We are to think pure and good thoughts.⁵ Jesus said that even if we do not commit murder, we become murderous when we harbor the thought, and though we may not commit adultery, we become adulterous when we have the desire for it.⁶

The idea is not extant that a wrong has not been committed unless someone is harmed. Sin is thought of as some heinous act which inflicts suffering on others, and the real sinner is the mobster boss, the drug pusher, the rapist and murderer. But Jesus declared that evil thoughts and desires are also sinful. He said that it is not wheat goes into the mouth that defiles a man but that which comes out. “But the things which proceed out of the mouth come forth out of the heart; and they defile the man, For out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, railings.”⁷ the “heart” refers to the center of one’s desire. So it is not just the man on death row who has sinned, but everyone who has evil desires. God wants not only clean hands, but clean hearts. For this reason scripture states that “All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God.”⁸ and David prayed, “Create in me a clean heart, O God.”⁹

ALL SIN IS AGAISNT GOD. When King David was made to realize his guilt, he cried out to God, “Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done that which is evil in thy sight.”¹⁰ Had he not seduced Bathsheba and had her husband killed? He knew that very well, but he also knew that the acts were committed because God and His purpose had been shoved aside. It is God who created order, and the violation of that order is sin against Him who designed it, whether or not anyone else is hurt.

Man’s rebellion against God is not just that he refuses to do God’s will, but that he rebels against being what God designed him to be. How far people can go in desecrating the image of God is described by Paul: “For this cause God gave them up unto vile passions: for their women changed the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in heir lust one toward another, men with men working unseemliness, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was due.”¹¹ Those who argue that homosexual relationships harm no one ignore the fact that such actions are diametrically opposed to the Creator’s design and purpose for sex. Therefore they sin against God as well as the whole human race.

SIN’S EFFECTS. The results of sin are seen in all the evils that plague mankind. Sin brought the curse of death to the race,¹² accompanied with disease, suffering and

sorrow. Sin destroys peace¹³ and extracts a high price from the sinner. “The way of the transgressor is hard.”¹⁴ Sin has fatally damaged the entire creation, so that it “groans and travails in pain until now.”¹⁵

Sin separates man from fellowship with his Creator¹⁶ and blinds him to the right course of life.¹⁷ But the ultimate effect of sin will be realized in the final judgment, “in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”¹⁸ The wages of sin is death,¹⁹ which is portrayed as destruction by fire. “This is the second death, even the lake of fire.”²⁰

Seldom do we hear anything of God’s wrath against sin. The experts in “Church Growth” advise against such a negative message. So we think of God only in terms of love, mercy and grace. Churches prefer a reputation as entertainment centers rather than a fellowship of people redeemed from sin and its penalty. Richard Niebuhr describes what has happened: “A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministration of a Christ without a cross.”²¹

But sin is real, and it is serious, serious enough to be worthy of death. Final death. Total death. The only way of escape is through Jesus, who died to pay that penalty for us.²² This is God’s message, for “He has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he has ordained; whereof he has given assurance to all men, in that he has raised him from the dead.”²³

The first requirement is that we believe it. “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieves shall be condemned.”²⁴

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